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## Notes and Opinions.

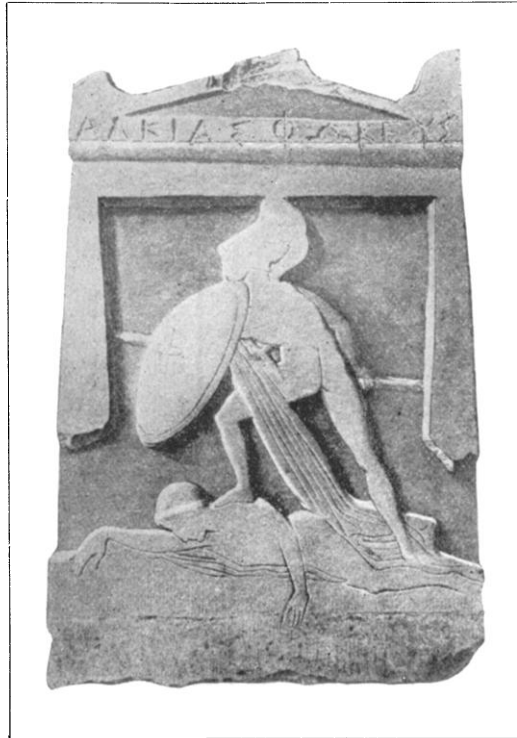
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**Melchisedek.**—Professor Sayce is the advocate, in season and out of season, of a theory which claims to find the substantiation of Melchisedek as an historical character in certain references of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets. One of these letters is from the governor of Jerusalem, Ebed-tob, who writes, according to Sayce, "Behold! neither my father nor my mother has exalted me in this place. The prophecy of the mighty king has caused me to enter the house of my father." Professor Sayce holds that the "mighty king" referred to here is the god of Jerusalem, Ninib, and therefore this king of Jerusalem claims to receive his authority from God, that is, to be a priest-king. Evidently, therefore, we have here a successor of Melchisedek, priest of the Most High God and king of Jerusalem (Gen. 14:18). Professor Driver, in the *Guardian*, denied the validity of this argumentation of Professor Sayce. In his answer to Professor Driver in the *Expository Times* for June, reprinted in the July number, Sayce holds that the title "mighty king" is never used of the Pharaoh of Egypt; that for the king of Jerusalem to say that he was (not a governor but) a "friend" or "ally" of the Pharaoh, who had been raised by the oracle or arm of the mighty king (meaning Pharaoh) would be nonsense. A reply is given by Professor Driver in the July number, in which he denies the validity of the argument of Professor Sayce from the title "mighty king," arguing that the context points to the application of this title to Pharaoh, denying also that there is any nonsense made of the passage by its interpretation as applying to the Egyptian king. He concludes by the assertion that, even if the reference is to the god of Jerusalem, between this governor of Jerusalem and Melchisedek a period of at least nine hundred years intervenes. He asks whether we may argue from a condition of things at the period of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets to a similar state of affairs nearly a thousand years before. He says: "Literally the inscriptions establish no point of contact whatever between Ebed-tob and Melchisedek. Even, therefore, though Professor Sayce's philological interpretations be accepted, my own position remains unaffected; the testimony borne by the Tel-el-Amarna tablets to the historical character of Melchisedek is absolutely nugatory and valueless."

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The cut in the center of the cover of our present issue is inserted not for its intrinsic beauty, nor because of any direct relation to biblical history, but because of its connection with Corinth, to which the excavations now in prog-

gress are directing fresh attention. Sculptural remains from Corinth, once so magnificently adorned with works of art, are extremely few. Kabbadias in his Catalogue of the National Museum (at Athens) mentions but two. Of these the one which we reproduce is a gravestone, to use the modern term, of one Alcias, a Phocian. Kabbadias thus describes it: Alcias is represented as a nude warrior with his back turned to view, wearing a helmet, and having a



tunic rolled together and thrown over his left arm in such way that it reaches to the ground. He holds in the left hand a shield and in the right a javelin, and stands in attitude of attack, facing to the left and trampling under foot the corpse of a naked foe lying outstretched, defending himself with the shield and thrusting forward with his spear in such way that he has the upper part of his body inclined forward and his legs are stretched wide apart.

Kabbadias thinks the monument cannot be later than the third century B.C.

**Professor Petrie's New "Israel" Inscription and its Interpretation.**—The discovery of the Merenptah slab containing the name of Israel has let loose a flood of communications and discussions as to its meaning and bearing upon the account of the Exodus. It is interesting to observe how widely writers differ on these points. Professor Sayce, writing in the *Sunday School Times* of July 11, 1896, concludes that "at any rate the theory which saw in Merenptah the Pharaoh of the Exodus has received a confirmation." Professor Max Müller, writing in the *Independent* of July 9, 1896, says that this inscription overthrows the current theory that Merenptah is the Pharaoh of the Exodus. It seems difficult to understand how two scholars could reach such absolutely contradictory conclusions.

The particular passage is as follows: "*Israel has been torn out without offshoot* (Müller); or "*The Israelites are minished so that they have no seed*" (Sayce). The points of importance about which a decision gathers may be said to be the following: (1) All agree that it is Israel that is referred to here; not, for example, Jezreel. (2) The determinative for Israel is not that of city or land, but that which means "foreign people," or, as Mr. Sayce holds, "a tribe," not "a settled people." (3) The strange expression here, "without offshoot or seed," irresistibly suggests the measure of Pharaoh by which the male children of the Israelites were put to death. This measure, however, has generally been ascribed to Ramses II, the Pharaoh of the oppression, not to Merenptah, whose accession is thought to come later in the Book of Exodus. (4) It is in dispute whether the position of this statement respecting the Israelites in the inscription, lying as it does between a passage referring to cities of Palestine and a passage mentioning Palestine itself, argues in favor of the Israelites being in Palestine at this time. If they were, then (a) the Exodus was already passed, or (b) the reference is to the Israelites living in Palestine in addition to those living in Egypt. Professor Marshall, writing in the *Expositor* of July 1896, accepts this latter interpretation, and refers to 1 Chronicles 7:22, which "represents the sons of Ephraim penetrating into Canaan as far as Gath." Dr. Sellin, writing in *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, vii:6, holds that it is not necessary to infer from the inscription that the Israelites were in Palestine. He would conclude that Merenptah, as well as Ramses II, was a Pharaoh who oppressed Israel, and not the Pharaoh of the Exodus; that he, therefore, was the author of the measure mentioned in Exodus 1, and refers to it in this inscription. He would hold with Maspero that the Exodus took place after Merenptah in the troubled time between the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties.

Professor Müller, on the other hand, suggests that the Exodus had taken place before both Merenptah and Ramses II, basing his theory upon the existence of names in Palestine like "Asher," "Jacob-el," "Joseph-el" and "Bit-ya" (that is, "House of Jah") in the lists of Thutmosis—all these names being long antecedent to the time of Merenptah. He is strongly

tempted to place the Exodus at the beginning of the eighteenth dynasty. Sellin justly objects to placing the Exodus at an earlier period, saying that we should expect, both in the Egyptian inscriptions and in the Hebrew narratives themselves, more definite references to Israel in Palestine if they were settled there as the books of Joshua and Judges represent them. Yet we have not the least reference in the books of Joshua and Judges to an Egyptian domination of Israel, although we know perfectly well that Ramses II was lord of Palestine for the latter half of his long-reign.

In *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, vii : 7, Professor Hommel argues (1) that Merenptah was never in Palestine ; (2) that the inscription refers to the Libyan invasion of Merenptah's fifth year ; (3) that it is highly poetical ; (4) exaggerated ; (5) that the Israelites were not in Palestine at this time ; (6) that the reference to them here proves that they were regarded by Merenptah as connected with the troubles accompanying the Libyan invasion ; (8) that therefore they had but just left Egypt in the confused period following the death of Ramses II.

It is, therefore, very uncertain at present what we are to make out of this new find. It seems to be the general impression among scholars that darkness rather than light has been spread abroad by it. But we have no doubt that more careful investigation and the discovery of new materials will enable us in the end to obtain a better understanding of this great crisis in Israel's history. It is significant that, in the latest utterances of Professor Wellhausen in his *History of Israel*, he accepts an Egyptian sojourn of Israel.